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PRAIRIE FAIRIES AND OTHER VERSES

By S. C. CAIN

PRAIRIE FAIRIES



with compliments
S. L. Cain
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S. M. Gentry
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To REV. FATHER HAYES,
or ST. BRIDGID'S PARISH,
TORONTO,

*this little booklet is respectfully
dedicated by the author.*

197966

FOREWORD

The author of the poems contained in this little volume is a newspaperman—a busy one. The profession of journalism in these latter days is so poorly considered in some quarters that it is a cause for satisfaction when a volume of verse of such promising mien as this stalks into the world and says:

"I am the child of the copy-desk. I am dreams born of the whirling presses while the world was sleeping, I am visions seen in the grey dawn of morning before the world awoke. I am the product of an hour—when a nation's hope went down at sea, with the 'dead-line' sixty minutes away. I come from the bustling marts of the East and the golden wheat fields of the West. I am variety, challenging a world of monotones. I am versatility. I am industry. I am the child of the copy-desk."

With words like those would this little collection of verse, written largely as part of the daily routine of a newspaper office, challenge an unenlightened public, all too little acquainted with the ways and means by which it is enabled to read with its morning coffee and rolls of events in China, which will not happen by the clock until noonday. The upper millstone of long hours and the nether stone of working under high pressure have not ground entirely out of the cult of journalism the fire of poetry or a love for the finer things of life or the power to see visions and dream dreams. Scattered here and there are still found newspapermen who can turn their pens with equal felicity to describing a political convention or inditing a stanza to the lady of their love.

Written as these poems were, amid the storm and stress of life in a newspaper office, absolute symmetry is not to be expected in them. They lay no claim to orderly sequence. They are the work of different times and different moods. The thread of thought is broken again and again. Yet there is charm in their individual isolation; while the wide range of subjects with which they deal testifies to the versatility of an author who has brought to them all a sympathetic touch, a friendly attitude, a spirit of cheerfulness and of optimism against odds, which are fruits of temperament not more than of the training received in the profession of which he is an ornament.

HAMILTON BUTLER.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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S. C. C.

PRAIRIE FAIRIES

There are fairies on the prairies,
Though they're very hard to find;
When I'm riding, they are hiding—
Never leave a trace behind.

Lunar pale is, as their veil is,
When these fairies are astir,
When I'm dreaming, moon's abeaming
On their wings of gossamer.

I have sought them, never caught them,
Though I've heard their tiny feet,
Flitting lightly, Oh, so spritely,
As they danced among the wheat.

Heard them singing, sweet bells ringing,
When the sun sank in the west;
Heard them sighing, night was dying,
Dawn was bidding them to rest.

There are fairies on the prairies,
Though I've never caught a peek
At their gambols in my rambles,
I shall never cease to seek.

Sleeping baby! ah, you may be,
See the moonbeams in their hair,
For the lair is of these fairies
Plain to you in dreamland there.

DECORATION DAY, REGINA

Tread softly o'er this holy ground,
Where angels loving vigil keep
Over each grass grown, earthly mound,
Where heroes sleep.

Time passes and our war-won scars
Are healing; but we owe a debt,
To those who rest beneath the stars—
Dare we forget?

Ah, here they sleep, who came again
To us, along the homeward road,
Then, as befits true, gallant men,
Lay down their load.

Nor wooden crosses, row on row—
Nor scarlet poppies mark their place;
But here, dear God, the afterglow
Of war we trace.

Tread softly by these hallow'd tombs
Of manhood's flow'r; of men of deeds;
Ah, though we drop our rarest blooms,
They are but weeds.

Yet, let us place our tributes down,
Their fragrance may as incense rise
To Him who wears a golden crown,
Above the skies.

And mayhap He will let them know
That we, although by cares beset,
Or e'en when pleasant ways we go
Do not forget.

FAITH

Although I tune my muse to song,
You may not hear me when I sing;
You sleep the poppied fields among,
My king, my king.

I will not sing of stars agleam,
Though tenderly they shine above,
As when both you and I would dream,
My love, my love.

But I will chant of poppies red,
In accents tender, low and sweet;
Though all too soon their beauty's shed,
In winter's winding sheet.

Yea, I will sing their scarlet bloom
Though they are gone like dreams of ours,
And gentle snows bedeck your tomb,
Like bridal flow'rs.

Ah me, so tender is my song,
You may not hear me as I sing;
But soon the barren fields among
Shall come the Spring.

And sweeter song than bird or stream
E'er sang shall come, resounding clear,
To thrill the soul. And I shall dream—
And you shall hear.

THE ANGLER

(Being the reply to a critic)

A river bank, and time to sit and dream,
As morning mists, like incense, upward stream.
A rising sun, that makes for earth a fire
With all the colors of the heart's desire.

A sighing wind, and many stirring trees,
A hazy sky, a perfume-laden breeze;
The song of night, like many sweet guitars,
The magic of the music of the stars.

A gentle dew besprinkled o'er the grass,
A path of pearls, on which the fairies pass;
A singing stream for ever surging on,
And air as sweet as musk and cinnamon.

The dawning day—the ev'ning's trembling hush,
And tints that ne'er were limned by painter's brush—
Sky blue, sea green and cloudlets edged with gold;
And mystery—as old as earth is old.

All these and more the angler learns to love,
To him they are uncovered treasure trove.
Nor church, nor creed, can tell him more of God,
Than do the sheening grasses when they nod.

What brooks it if the fish refuse to bite,
The trout to rise; the sportive bass to fight,
No wasted hours can angler ever feel,
His heart is full, though empty be his creel.

THE POET'S TASK

To catch the music of the birds,
And write it down in simple words,
That when the feathered songsters sing,
We, too, may join their caroling.

To catch the murmur of the trees;
To hear just what they tell the breeze,
And then, in tender vibrant phrase,
Give to the world their song of praise.

To catch the woodland wind that blows;
Fragrant with ev'ry flow'r that grows;
And then, with mastery of rhyme,
Dispel the long dread winter time.

To take the cold, the ice, the sleet—
The snow of winter's winding sheet,
And make us see that underneath,
Lies gentle Springtime's bridal wreath.

To take the wounded heart's distress—
The smiles of glowing happiness;
Then show that tears, like April rain,
Mean that the sun will shine again.

To give to lonely hearts and sad,
Something at least to make them glad.
With magic art of minstrelsy,
People their lives with company.

To teach us, though the way be long,
The world is filled with joyous song.
Make us to know, earth's songs, so giv'n,
Are echoes of the songs of heav'n.

THE HERMIT

Give me green fields and radiant skies,
The songs of birds, the tender sighs
Of trees, which greet the fragrant air,
For God is there.

My waking ear the skylark thrills;
The nightingale at evening trills;
Far from the worldly city throng,
Here, all is song.

Alone, yet not alone, I stand;
Here I can feel the guiding hand
I lost when other paths I trod,
The hand of God.

Alone, nay not alone, my soul
Can hear ecstatic music roll;
Rapture devout, and peace, ah, yes,
Not loneliness.

Unroofed, save by the stars, I rest,
My soul a palace, and my Gods its guest;
Immortal love, divinely taught,
Controls my thought.

And when I die—because I knew
God called me, when the nightwind blew—
Say that I sang with closing breath,
O, welcome death.

Yea, welcome death, though thro' the grave
The earth receive the dust it gave;
But for my spirit clean of sin
Life will begin.

"I HEAR A VOICE YOU CANNOT HEAR"

I saw a shooting star flash through the skies,
And fade to nothingness, ah me—
How like the light which faded from our eyes—
So suddenly.

I heard the rain drops falling from the leaves,
As a lone dreamer often hears.

They seemed, dear heart, (how fancy sometimes weaves),
Just like your tears.

I felt cool fingers touch my weary brow,
As tho' to give my aching eyelids ease;
Or did I dream? Ah, I remember now—
It was the breeze.

I saw a shooting star flash out and die,
Then I remembered, love too often yields
A joy as brief as meteors in the sky—
And mine lies buried where you lie,
In Flanders Fields.

GIPSY LAMENT

Maid am I of the sunlight,
And he was a Gringo lad;
But his eyes would glow, with light we know,
When the Gipsy heart is glad.

Maid am I of the Nomads
But the stars told not my fate
When a gentle lad, that the moon made mad,
Wooed me for his life-long mate.

Maid am I of the Gipsies,
And he was a lad in love;
But he woode a hawk, with the gentle talk
That might win a turtle dove.

Maid am I, yet I lov'd him,
Though maid I shall always be,
And my heart shall sigh, though I scarce know why,
And who shall enlighten me?

Lad was he, and he pleaded,
But pleaded alas, in vain,
For no Gipsy e'er, has begged, I swear,
For what he might have ta'en.

Maid am I, and I left him,
And went to my sunny South,
For the fool would wait, with lips of his mate,
An inch from his longing mouth.

THE WINDS THAT BLOW

The wind from the North blows cold, so cold,
And love is dead, and I'm growing old.

The wind from the West blows fresh and keen,
And love is young and the trees are green.

The East wind blows; there's a clear blue sky,
And I am young, and love will not die.

The hot wind blows from the sunny South,
Scarlet poppies and scarlet mouth.

Oh, never was there a wind that blew,
That brought me no thought of love and you.

EVENING

My work is done, and weary, faint,
Beside my cottage door,

I watch the hand of nature paint
Earth's evening beauties o'er.

I mark the glow of waning day
That welcomes falling night,
When daily cares are borne away
On ev'ning breezes light.

The starry eyes of heav'n glow
O'er mountain, plain and sea,
Like angel lamps my thoughts to show
The way, O God, to Thee.

And when I pray the fragrant breeze
Comes like an answer giv'n,
And gently stirs the silent trees
With whispered songs of heav'n.

As softly beams the rising moon
Dark shadows fade and flee,
Sweet symbol of thy coming soon
To light eternity.

SINCERITY

'Tis not the pretty things we say,
Nor those we write

That drive the clouds of life away;
And yet how bright

Would be our lives and how content
If half our kindly words were meant.

ON THE OPEN ROAD

These are the thoughts of a wanderer,
Adrift on the open road,
Playing with time, as a squanderer
Plays with his golden load.

If ever an ancient warrior
Sought fame on a finer trail,
Methinks that he had a sorrier
Chance of the Golden Grail.

Like a shifting sand is loyalty;
Kings pass to their last abode,
But ever is one great Royalty—
God—on the open road.

There are no thoughts melancholy
At night, for the soft winds say,
"Only a fool in his folly
Feareth the dawn of the day."

And I, when I rise from my wallowing
On a mossy couch, am sure,
Death is the daylight following
Night that we must endure.

JILTED

I pray you grant me this
From your dear lips one kiss.

I was your lover;
Then let the night wind sigh
Above the place I lie,
For life is over.

GOOD-BYE

Kiss me again,
It is such pain
Loving you, dear.
Oh! how I fear
To let you go,
I love you so.
Why should I dread?—
I saw you dead,
Dear, in my dreams?
How real it seems?
God, what a price
You....I....sacrifice.
Yes, dear, I know
I must let you go—
No, I won't cry.
Kiss me! Good-bye,
Dear heart, good-bye.

God, don't let him die.

"FOR TOMORROW WE DIE"

Away with your talk of sorrow,
Give me the wine cup red,
I will not pine, for tomorrow
I shall be cold and dead.
I shall be gone and sleeping,
Lone in my earthly bed,
From which the grape vine creeping,
Shall fill up wine cup red.

THE CALL.

God be thanked, the sons of Britain
 Heard her battle cry;
Like an echo from the shadows,
 Where our fathers lie.

Ev'ry wind that swept the prairie
 Carried it along.
Ev'ry berg that broke and drifted
 Thundered forth the song.

Where the Southern Cross kept vigil,
 Was the slogan heard;
And the parched and trackless desert,
 Listened and was stirred.

Where the Eastern splendor dazzled,
 With its lazy ease,
Still the never-ending echo
 Trembled on the breeze.

Where the outposts of the Empire,
 Solitary rest,
There the call came winging to them,
 On its distant quest.

And the men who heard it answered,
 "Britain must not call in vain;"
All the paths that they were treading,
 Led back home again.

TO A WORM

I sing me not the daffodils,
Nor tulips do I sing,
Nor budding trees, nor gentle breeze,
That gaily herald Spring.

I sing me not the crocuses,
Nor the upspringing grass
Now spreading fair a carpet rare,
On which sweet Spring may pass.

The lilac buds tune not my muse,
To tender song or gay,
Spring's saraband upon the land
Wakes no responsive lay.

But I have walked my garden plot.
So lately frozen firm,
And, 'neath a mound, have dug and found,
A pink and wriggly worm.

And I will make my song to this
The first worm of the year,
To me at least, he's the high priest
Of waters fresh and clear.

O, wriggle, little worm, the while,
I take my tackle down,
My line and reel, my rod and creel,
Mayfly and hackle brown.

Yes, wriggle wriggle little worm,
Each movement brings a thrill.
A song of praise, a dream of days,
By waters cool and still.

And not alone for dreams you bring,
Do I my song indite;
When trout are shy and scorn the fly
Or other fish won't bite—

'Tis then, 'tis then, you prove your worth,
Tho' lowly your estate,
All else may fail—flies, minnow pail—
You always are good bait.

MY LOVE AND I

My Love arrayed herself in white,
And tripping lightly o'er the green,
Came singing through the summer night,
Light-hearted as a Fairy Queen.
Down to the brook whose ripples call
The lovers to love's carnival.

My Love arrayed herself in white,
What though it is a memory;
I still can see the pleasant sight
Oft in a midnight reverie.
I still can hear love's tender song,
As sings the stream its way along.

My Love arrayed herself in white,
Yet sweeter than that vision fair,
Before me in the fading light
I see her head of snow-white hair.
Ah yes; the years go rolling by,
But we still sing, my love and I.

A DREAM

I who have sought for beauty lay me down
Grown weary with my search; and then I ~~deamed~~
I stood before a king, whose golden crown
Glowed with great glory, and it gleamed
With lovely gems, that shone with living light
And swept away the shadows of the night.

The human world seemed far away; I heard
Sweet waves of music, floating from the skies;
Chords as by some great master hand were stirred,
My soul throbbed to their rhythmic fall and rise.
Wave crest of joy to tears, and then surcease
Of music, to a silence sweet with peace.
And mute with magic I could only gaze
Upon the radiant features of the king,
Who smiled to see my eyes filled with amaze,
He spoke, and bade me cease my wondering.
His voice was low and sweet, and seemed to be
Tenderly vibrant, deep with sympathy.

"Called from the purple shadows men call sleep,
Thou searcher, shake the dream dust from thine eyes,
And cease thy longing, watching long years creep
Away unyielding. Oh, foolish heart, be wise
And heed my words, then shalt thou surely see
Beauty revealed in all its eestaeay.

"Look not with horror on the thing ealled death,
For beauty lurks within the shuttered room;
Souls that go out upon the nightwind's breath,
Find life beyond the earthly veil of gloom.
Thou who art prey to haunting doubts and fears,
Thou canst find beauty where thou findest tears.

“Thou hast passed by the common things and found
No comfort in thy dreams of higher things,
Thine ears have heard the melody of sound,
That haunts the forest when all nature sings,
Weaving a web of fancy when the real
Held more of beauty than thy soul could feel.

“Behold the lustre of these gems that shine
Far brighter than the stars; they form the crown
That beauty wears, and yet they once were thine
When they were common things and were thrown down.
A laugh unheard, a sigh passed by, and near
Thee once there dropped a mother’s tear.

“Take heed and learn that beauty is in life
Found in dark clouds, as well as sunlit skies;
And they who fall in deadly battle strife,
Find it in death, though beauty never dies.
For life is beauty, and the soul set free
By death, finds life’s eternal melody.

“Now get thee back unto the realms of sleep,
Then waken to thy daily task and find
At last to thy new vision there shall leap
Beauty exultant, where thou once wert blind.”

Again the music throbbed, then died away;
My eyes were opened to a new-born day.

ROSES

Rare beauty shines in fragrant roses,
Jewels of June to the soft winds nod;
Gather we then from our gardens, posies,
Scent of the summertime fresh from God.

MY LADY'S LIPS

I kissed my lady's hand;
She did not smile.
I did not understand,
Till after while.

I kissed my lady's hair;
Her glance was cold;
Tho' I found hidden there
The gleam of gold.

I kissed my lady's brow,
With tenderness.
She scarcely felt I vow,
My warm caress.

I kissed my lady's mouth—
Red lips upon.
The sun of all the south
In her eyes shone.

LOST--

If I have sought for Beauty in the stars,
Or prayed like some old pagan worshipper,
Held fast within love's golden prison bars,
At least I sought for HER.

And if I sought for beauty, it was vain
For as I turned and watched the azure sea,
I knew because we'd never meet again,
Beauty was lost with THEE.

DOUBT

Why must I always long for you?

Since you are naught to me.

Why dream of deeds I may not do,

And things that may not be?

A tree holds more than one sweet rose,

And though the fairest bloom

Be out of reach, the wind that blows

Is fragrant with perfume.

'Twere better far I should forget

Desires, alas in vain,

Than dream the dreams that bring regret

And waking hours of pain.

Yet, even so, the witching smile,

Which lurks within your eyes,

Still holds (I know not yet a while)

My hell or paradise.

TIME

For all the glory of the flow'rs

Their fragile beauty but perfumes,

The breath of some few vagrant hours

When time its ravages resumes;

And seeing beauty it devours.

'Though summer pass without a show'r

Ev'n when the rains came not in spring.

Though man exert his utmost pow'r

A harvest bare shall autumn bring;

Time will not stay its flight one hour.

WHERE ARE THE HILLS OF DREAMS?

Where are the hills of dreams, lass, where are the hills of dream?

Do you remember as a lass and lad
We dreamed of a cottage ivy clad,
And toddlers, calling us mum and dad,—

As gaily we started adown life's road to search for the
hills of dream?

Where are the hills of dream, lass, where are the hills of
dream?

Do you remember how wonder-eyed
We watched our toddlers grow, with pride,
Do you recall, lass, when they died,
And left us trudging our way alone in search of the hills
of dream?

Where are the hills of dream, lass, where are the hills of
dream?

Do you remember as years flew by,—
How mirth was mingled with tear or sigh,
But we never mumured; not you and I,
When the road we travell'd seemed to lead away from the
hills of dream:

Where are the hills of dream, lass, where are the hills of
dream?

The twilight falls, the day is told,
But dear, the sunset's fill'd with gold,
And though both you and I are old,
We've come to the foot of the hills, lass, the foot of the
hills of dream.

"THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE"

"Today we honor those whose souls have fled,
Who carried freedom where the wild seas sweep.
To build an Empire needs a mighty dead,
Makers of Empire, peaceful be your sleep.

So brave they went, nor thought to weave
Garlands of praise about their name.
Hearts were bitter who saw them leave,
With never a thought of life or fame.
A mother called to her far-flung brood,
And Blood must answer the call of Blood.

Faithful they were, and just and brave,
Fixed in their hearts a shining light.
Courage and love of duty gave,
Their sires of old, in lesser fight.
The light of heroes that led them well
Out to great spaces where'er they fell.

But now again, upon the bough,
The birds may sing their tender song,
Peasant may walk behind the plough—
The Marne and Meuse still wind along,
For Peace hath dawned and earth is glad—
The earth so long by war made mad.

Yea, peace hath dawned on fertile plain,
And swords grow dull and thick with rust;
Seed time and harvest come again:
But they still lie in alien dust.
And where they take their last long sleep
Men till and toil and sow and reap.

Ah, Flanders Fields, where they withstood
The battle shock and met their God,
To us are fields—so stained with blood—
As dear as our Canadian sod.
Fields that shall yield a richer grain,
Than e'er they gave before that stain.

So too shall we, from their great deeds,
Reap the rich fruits of what they sowed,
Scorning all narrow thoughts and creeds,
To walk a brighter, broader road.
For they have watered with their blood,
God's seed of human brotherhood.

BEAUTY

There is naught in brows of marble,
Or in hands as white as snow,
Silken tresses, brown or golden,
Starry eyes that brightly glow,
Lips that on the rose have feasted,
Cheeks the dawn has painted red.
Breath as fragrant as the flowers
By the summer sunshine fed—
All are cold as skies in winter,
Till the quickened heartbeats move,
And the soul of beauty wakens
At the tender kiss of love.

A TRIBUTE TO LORD KITCHENER

Farewell, brave heart, the Mistress of the Sea
Bows low her head; her children mourn for thee.
Sleep well! Upon the mighty ocean's bed
Thou liest with the greatest of our dead.

Above thy tomb no monument may rise
Of fashioned stone uplifted to the skies.
But he that dies to save his native land
Carves fame immortal with his dying hand.

And thou shalt live, within our hearts enshrined,
When time hath left the grief of war behind.
For what thou didst all men shall honor thee,
Whene'er they taste the fruit of liberty.

AN AVIATOR'S SONG

Above the hallow'd Flanders sod,
Where our dead heroes lie,
Above the place where poppies nod
(The gateway to the house of God),
I fly.

And where our men lie down to rest,
Tho' loud the big guns roar,
Above un-pillow'd heads, caressed
By dreams of loved ones in the west,
I soar.

Above the winding battle sears
(Trenches our men have dug),
I sail to meet the god of Mars,
Among Christ's lamps—the gleaming stars—
I chug.

Above? Nay not above; I feel
The fire of war's red breath.

Crash! Oh, God, she's off her keel—
She falls! "Old bus, you're through!" I reel
To death.

WINDS OF THE EARTH

I heard the voice of the North wind;
And it seemed to say to me:
"I am lord of the forest,
I am king of the sea.
I am the death-wind bringing
A winding sheet to lay
Where once were flowers upspringing,
And none shall say me nay."

The voice of the west wind murmured:
"A monarch thou art, but still,
Kings but reign in their splendor,
Because of a mightier will.
Thou art king for a reason—
(Thou boaster from the north)
That the queen of the world in season,
Fruits of the earth bring forth."

The voice of the East wind chanted:

“Ah, truly my brother, West,
Speaketh in words of wisdom;
The winds of earth are bless'd.
I, who come from the ocean,
Know that the North wind lies;
Ever is life and motion,
Where foam-flicked billows rise.”

A voice that was filled with sweetness,
Spake low, and it scarce was heard:
“I am queen of the south lands;
I am song of the bird;
I am warmth that shall nourish,
Life from a seeming death.
And once again shall flourish
Flow'rs, and man's stronger faith.”

A KISS

She was asleep. She did not stir,
Or hear the nightwind croon;
Her bare arms on the comforter
Shone whitely in the moon.

She was asleep. I stole a kiss;
I stole a kiss and she
That stolen gem will never miss
From her rich treasury.

I stole a kiss. I was not bold,
Nor was I, think you, bad.
For she had just turned three years old,
And I, well, I'm her Dad.

DAWN--

When gauzy mists hang on the hill
And lamps of night fade overhead,
While sleeping earth lies calm and still,
The eastern sky grows faintly red.

When dewdrops sparkle in the light
Shed by the sun in cold disdain,
The dazzled stars and conquered night,
Welcome the coming day again.

The lark awakes and greets the sun,
And singing gaily mounts the sky,
And human hearts from sleep are won,
To laughter some and some to sigh.

And fresh from sleep I too awake,
And lift mine eyes to Heav'n and Thee,
And ere my daily road I take,
I pray that Thou wilt strengthen me.

And grant me this, that as I go,
From ashen dawn to close of day,
I may some little kindness show
To those who falter on the way.

TEARS AND SMILES

Tears are raindrops which oft start
When love is on the wane,
Smiles are sunbeams of the heart
Which check the falling rain.

